



INFORMATION ONLY COUNCIL REPORT

To: Paul Gipps, CAO

Date: May 11, 2021

From: Jason Brolund, Fire Chief
Stacey Harding, Parks and Fleet Ops Manager

Subject: **Spring 2021 Wildfire Mitigation Update**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report continues the series of updates Council is provided on activities and progress to reduce the impacts of wildfire in the City of West Kelowna.

Mitigation through public education and forest fire fuel reduction is an annual ongoing activity involving City staff, contractors and the general public. Mitigation activities are driven by scientific direction outlined in the 2018 West Kelowna Community Wildfire Protection Plan, which was adopted by Council in December 2018. The plan can be viewed at:

<https://www.westkelownacity.ca/en/city-hall/resources/Documents/CWPPUpdate-26OCT2018.pdf>

Since 2019, funding has been provided by Provincial 'Community Resiliency Investment' (CRI) and 'FireSmart' grants as well as from budgeted City funds.

The scope of this report will be a review of activities taking place in 2021.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Foster Safety and Wellbeing

BACKGROUND

An internal committee was formed in 2020 to coordinate the work of Wildfire Mitigation within the CWK. Built upon the successful model of the CWK Flood Operations Committee, it includes staff from Parks, Planning, WKFR and Communications as well as outside support from experts in this area. This committee coordinates current and future grant applications as well as Wildfire Mitigation initiatives within CWK and WFN (on behalf of WKFR).

Community Resiliency Investment Program Grant

At the October 6, 2020 meeting, Council directed staff to apply for the maximum funding (\$150,000) available under the CRI Grant Program for 2021. In February 2021, staff were advised by the province that \$132,970 was approved for the following projects:

- Public Education
- FireSmart Activities for Residential Areas
- Fuel Management Prescriptions and Treatments

The province did not approve \$17,030 for emergency planning activities that were proposed, consisting of wildland interface preplanning.

2021 Activity – Public Education

Due to the provincial restriction on public gatherings, the 6th annual 2020 FireSmart Family Day was postponed. Unfortunately, this will continue to be the case again in 2021. This flagship FireSmart event will be hosted once the COVID pandemic situation has passed.

Should this not be possible in the fall of 2021, a different community engagement activity will be delivered. Staff has begun planning a local FireSmart video, which could air on Global Okanagan.

2021 Activity – FireSmart Activities

Local governments have very limited statutory authority to enforce fuel mitigation and fire prevention activities on private land. Consequently, public education and awareness of “FireSmart” principles has been the primary focus of wildfire prevention and mitigation.

Grants: The FireSmart Grant program for 2021 is now open. **Homeowners that conduct FireSmart practices to reduce the impact of wildfire can receive up to \$500 per property.** Program requirements and application packages are available on the City of West Kelowna & WFN websites. \$50,000 is available in 2021.

Debris Disposal: Residents, strata’s and neighborhood associations can access **FREE debris disposal** including chipper and dumpster rentals and landfill vouchers for tipping fees. Contact WKFR for more information.

Neighborhood Plans/Recognition: Three neighborhood areas have been identified and will be working toward creating their **FireSmart neighborhood plans** and FireSmart Community recognition. This includes the neighborhoods of Rockridge, Casa Loma and Pettman Rd, Bowes Rd, Parkinson Rd and Griffiths Rd.

2021 Activity – Fuel Management Prescriptions and Treatments

The CWPP includes a science-based risk assessment of the City's 61 highest rated wildfire hazards. This priority list includes all jurisdictions of property ownership including Crown, RDCO, WFN, private and City owned properties.

City staff continues to work through the priority list identified in the CWPP:

- completion of Spring 2020 grant projects (2)
- completion of Fall 2020 projects (3)
- tender of Spring 2021 projects to be completed in fall 2021(3)

Treatment area #48 (Casa Palmero) has been reassessed as no longer meeting the high priority criteria and will not be a component of the 2021 scope.

The City has now completed up to priority #48 of 61 and the scope of addressing our extreme to high priorities is reducing. Should the City continue to be successful under the provincial CRI Grant program, it is estimated that one more future grant approval will clean up all remaining high to extreme wildfire hazards on City of West Kelowna owned properties. The CWK Wildfire Mitigation Committee will reassess our strategy beyond this point.

Planned works for 2021 include:

Priority #	Property	Area	Size	Notes
7	Rose Ridge Park	North slope	3.2	Roseridge Court
9	Rose Valley	Reservoir Dam	1.1	Chlorination station
10	Davidson Creek	Steep south face	8.5 h	Shannon Hill Place
13 & 22	Mt. Boucherie	Lower west and north slopes	5.7	Behind High school and current city hall
14	Jonagold Park	Lower west side	0.9	Next to Westbank First Nations border
30	Shannon Highlands Park	All dense growth	2.8	Shannon Way drive
39	Mt. Boucherie Crown lands	North east slopes	3.3	South of Hudson elementary

CWPP Completed Recommendations:

- The City of West Kelowna and Westbank First Nation websites have been updated to include FireSmart specific pages highlighting the FireSmart Program, including a link to FireSmart Canada and additional information on the Neighborhood Recognition Program.
- The City of West Kelowna website provides links to the current West Kelowna Fire Danger Rating and BC Wildfire.
- A FireSmart Committee has been formed with representatives from City of West Kelowna – WKFR, Parks & Fleet Operations and Communications and Engagement Departments.
- Three prevention staff members at WKFR have been trained as FireSmart Local Representatives.

Other Initiatives:

- One Way In/Out Inventory: Staff from GIS, Planning and WKFR have undertaken a study that will produce an inventory of one way in/out neighborhoods. The results will be shared with Council and used to improve evacuation from these areas and inform future planning and development decisions.
- Casa Loma Evacuation Planning: A multi-stakeholder group of 16 has been formed to draft an evacuation plan for the Casa Loma neighborhood. A draft is expected to be completed prior to wildfire season and will contain recommendations to improve evacuation from this area.
- Glenrosa Secondary Access: Staff will post signage and complete the annual condition assessment of the secondary emergency egress from Glenrosa via Jackpine FSR. Staff will also request the province undertake grading and general improvements prior to wildfire season.
- Wildland Preplanning: WKFR and GIS staff continue to build upon and improve mapping and information gathering in the wildland interface area. This includes mapping of trails, accesses, water supplies and other critical infrastructure that would be used in an emergency. This is a multi-year initiative that was not approved for grant funding, but will continue to move ahead using existing resources.
- Emergency Operations Centre Preparations and Training: Staff from across the organization have completed (or are in the process of completing) EOC training under the Regional Emergency Program. WKFR continues to provide support and expertise to the EOC and WFN as they complete emergency planning enhancements.
- WFN Mitigation: Staff continues to work closely to support WFN grant, planning and mitigation activities. We were happy to learn that WFN has completed prescriptions for 9 units totaling over 60 hectares in the core of their Tsinstikeptum lands on the Westside. They anticipate mitigation works beginning this year, including a large area in the vicinity of Johnson Bentley Memorial Aquatic Centre and North East of the Casa Loma neighborhood.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No new financial implications are anticipated. Staff will allocate the 2021 funding as follows:

CRI Grant Component	CWK Implementation	Requested Grant Amount
Education (Mandatory)	FireSmart Family Day Open House -OR- COVID Plan "B" – Video series	\$5,000
FireSmart Residential	Grants/Rebates to the Public (includes \$5,000 for promotion)	\$50,000
	Debris Disposal (bins, chipping, fees)	\$5,000
	FireSmart Plans and Recognition	\$3,000
Fuel Management Activities	Prescriptions	\$7,870
	Fuel Treatments	\$62,100
Total Grant Request		\$132,970
CWK budgeted Operating funds will be used for additional prescriptions, field work and operational treatments as per the CWPP.		\$50,000

WFN will fund their portion on grants given to WFN properties under the program.

Grant funding is represented in the Annual Financial plan as both revenue and expense.

REVIEWED BY

Warren Everton, Director of Finance, CFO

Shelley Schnitzler, Legislative Services Manager/Corporate Officer

APPROVED FOR THE AGENDA BY

Paul Gipps, CAO

Powerpoint: Yes ☒ No ☐

Attachment

1. Fuel Treatment Progress